



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

August 27, 2003

Ron Gamache, Chair
Yakima Health District Board of Health
104 N. 1st Street
Yakima, WA 98901

Dear Mr. Gamache:

I am writing to thank you for putting a discussion with the State Board of Health (SBOH) on your June 18, 2003 meeting agenda. I found the discussion to be very helpful, as did SBOH Policy Manager Craig McLaughlin.

As I mentioned at the meeting, the Board is looking to establish stronger relationships with local boards of health around the state. The feedback we get from local boards will help shape our priorities for future policy work, and they will also inform our work on the *2004 State Health Report*, which will establish health priorities for state health agencies.

I would like to iterate those things that I took away from that discussion, and I would like to hear back from Yakima Health District Board of Health members if we failed to capture their concerns adequately:

A couple of your members mentioned the importance of stable, secure, and robust funding for public health. There was particular concern about Senate Bill 5659, the stated intent of which is to allow local governments to raise either the sales and use, a property tax levy, or both to pay to fund criminal justice and public health. Any tax increase would require voter approval. Members pointed out that there were questions about how substantial any increase would be (someone questioned whether the increase would even cover the cost of an election). There was particular concern about the needs of rural counties that have almost no sales tax base.

Strengthening rural health care was another issue, as was increasing access to and utilization of preventive care for children. One board member made the point that a successful response to any disease outbreak will require strong partnerships between local health jurisdictions and both the State Board of Health and the Department of Health.

SBOH will consider the concerns of the Yakima Health District Board of Health and other local boards as we set our future priorities and recommend statewide health priorities to the executive branch of state government. I have asked Board staff to inform the Yakima Health District Board of Health of any new activities that speak to the concerns I've noted in this letter. When future concerns arise, I would encourage Yakima Health District board members to contact me, SBOH chair Linda Lake, or any member of the SBOH staff.

Sincerely,

Vickie Ybarra, RN, MPH
Member, Washington State Board of Health

cc: Yakima Health District Board of Health Members
Dennis Klukan, Yakima County Health Department
Washington State Board of Health Members
Craig McLaughlin, Washington State Board of Health